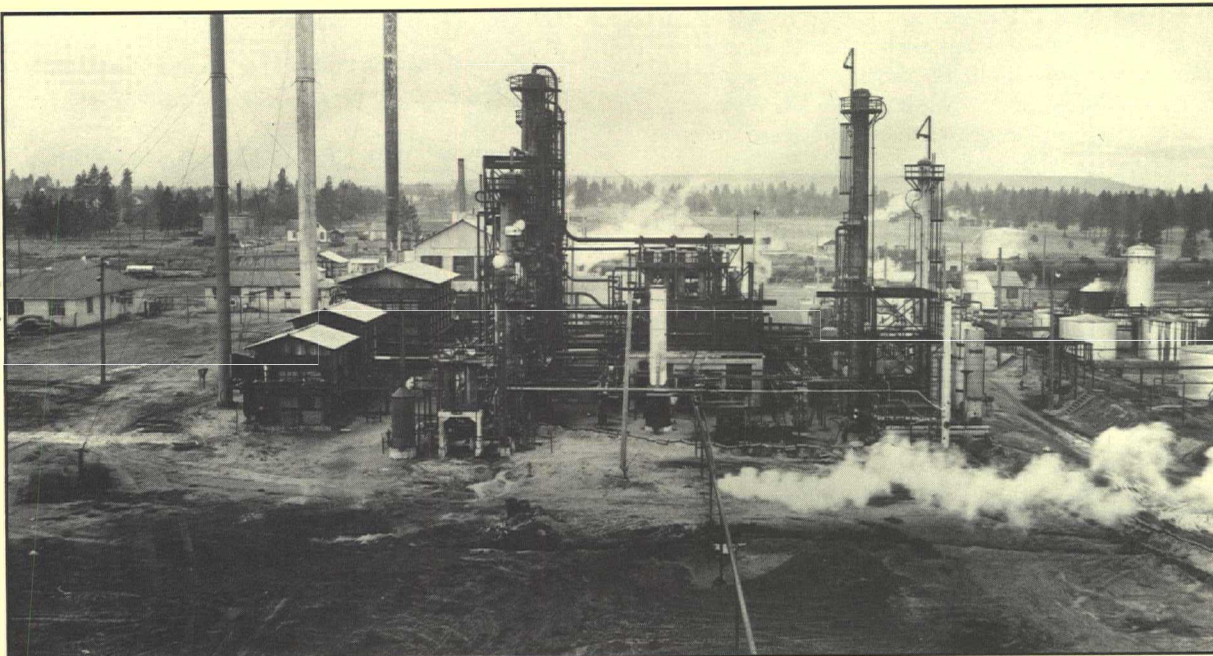


Hazardous waste: Ecology looks for petroleum contamination in Spokane

Photo courtesy Spokane Historical Society



The old Inland Empire Refinery, as it was called, about 1938. The refinery was sold and operated by several different companies until about 1953. During that time, a lot of waste from refinery operations was disposed of on site.

Ecology is looking for petroleum contamination in Spokane. The agency began groundwater and soil testing in March for petroleum contamination in Spokane's North Market/Freya Street area.

Ecology wants to find the extent of contamination and where it is coming from. A report of the investigation's findings will be completed within 15 months.

Tests completed last summer on 33 private wells showed four wells were contaminated with petroleum by-products. Soil also was heavily contaminated. Petroleum refining and storage businesses have operated in the area since the 1920s.

"Because the wells are not used for drinking water and the soils are in fenced areas, there's no immediate health hazard," said Doug Dunster, Ecology project manager. "But we need to complete the tests and plan a cleanup to make sure the contamination doesn't spread. Our main concern is to keep those contaminants from spreading to other parts of the Spokane aquifer."

Ecology drilled five boreholes to collect information on soil characteristics and the extent of soil contamination. Test pits also will be dug with a backhoe.

Beginning in May, up to 33 groundwater-monitoring wells will be installed. The wells will be tested three times during the study.

Dunster estimated testing will cost about \$1.4 million. Ecology planned the study in conjunction with several businesses that may be responsible for causing the contamination. State funds will be used to determine the amount of contamination and who might be responsible. After responsible firms are identified, Ecology will seek to recover state money spent on the studies and future cleanup activities.

BASELINE

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Cleaning up the Sound: Nonpoint pollution is Ecology's first target

Ecology has identified nonpoint pollution as its first target in the campaign to clean up Puget Sound. Nonpoint sources, such as agricultural or construction-related runoff or overflowing septic systems, were identified by the Puget Sound Water Quality Authority as one of the major causes of contamination in the Sound.

According to Ecology's Puget Sound coordinator Jim Krull, the nonpoint source problem will take many years to resolve and will require the cooperation of individual property owners and all levels of government.

"While Puget Sound counties are identifying and ranking their watersheds for future nonpoint source action plans, Ecology will be providing funding for both new and continuing projects," Krull said.

According to Krull, Ecology is building a list of "early action" watersheds. Six watersheds with ongoing shellfish protection programs will automatically be designated for early action. The six are Sequim Basin, Quilcene Basin, Totten/Skookum Inlet, Eld Inlet, Henderson Inlet and Minter Bay/Burley Lagoon.

To prepare the remainder of the early action list, Ecology has asked counties, Indian tribes, environ-

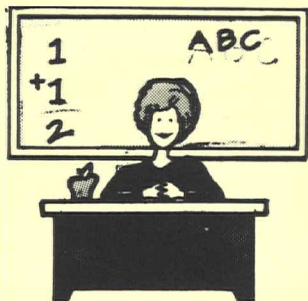
mental groups and other organizations to nominate watersheds with nonpoint pollution problems.

Following a May 8 cutoff date, Ecology will rank the nominees based on the degree to which each watershed:

- currently or potentially impacts a beneficial use like swimming, drinking water or commercial shellfish growing;
- faces intensified use in the years ahead;
- is more likely to have water quality problems because of factors like poor soils, steep slopes or limited flushing;
- has mechanisms in place to produce successful nonpoint source-control programs.

Top priority watersheds on the list will receive consideration for funding. The number of watersheds funded will depend on available funds as well as the ability of an agency that's eligible for a grant to develop an approvable grant proposal, Krull said.

A draft priority list will be available for public review and comment before the final list is prepared. The final list and available funding will be announced June 30.



News for schools

Ecology's A-Way with Waste school program is distributing 2,000 copies of its new publication, A-Way with Waste News for Schools. The newsletter fea-

tures current facts and information about waste management useful to teachers who attended workshops and received the A-Way with Waste curriculum.

Winter, spring and fall issues of the newsletter will be published each year. Samples of articles include:

- Features on students' recycling activities in schools.
- How to invite a Litter and Recycling representative to present household hazardous-waste information to students.

- A list of free teaching materials and how to order them for use in the classroom.
- Citizens, educators, waste managers, recyclers and industry representatives are welcome to submit waste-management information of interest to schools to the editor. If you would like to submit information, or receive a copy of the newsletter, contact the editor:

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